

Why the Peeresses of Britain Go on the Stage

Extraordinary Situation Develops
When Former Duchess of Westminster
Is Discovered "Acting" and Another
Peeress Comes Here to Join Chorus



Lord Howard de Walden, one of the greatest landowners in Britain, who is furnishing the money to make picture stars out of some of England's duchesses and noble ladies, and to the right "Audley End," the famous castle of Lord de Walden, where duchesses and peeresses are trained to be movie stars.



The beautiful, new Duchess of Westminster, who, it is rumored, is seriously considering lending herself to a screen production to be made in the near future.



Lady Lillian Maxwell-Willshire, who was so determined to "make a hit" in the movies that just to get experience she came to New York incognito and became an ordinary chorus girl.



The Baroness Ica Lenreffy, who was Countess Ica Roboz of Hungary. Although both her family and that of her husband, the Baron Lenreffy, are very wealthy, she succumbed to the movie lure and has appeared in many successful film dramas on the continent. She is soon to star in a great cinema masterpiece to be made by Lord Walden's company.

of Clonmell, formerly Susan Berridge, of the Empire Theater, is another ex-variety actress who occupies a very distinguished position in London.

Are there many women born to the purple who can show the same varied attractions as these stage women? No doubt this question has disturbed the minds of many restless society women and highborn flappers and decided them to prove that they can show equal charm or at least can develop it in the favorable atmosphere of the footlights and the green-room.

There is quite a class of English noblemen who have gone on the stage themselves in addition to taking stage wives. Viscount Dangan, who later became Earl Cowley, a member of the Duke of Wellington's family, is a professional dancer and married a New York chorus girl, with whom he is now giving exhibitions.

Sir Gerald Maxwell-Willshire, a British baronet of very ancient family, sought the bubble of fame as a chorus man, and while doing so married a pretty chorus girl who played in "Afgar." She proudly styles herself Lady Lillian Maxwell-Willshire, which helps to draw attention to her natural attractions.

The latest London gossip is that the gay Lord Craven, a grandson of the New York Bradley Martins, is planning to go on the vaudeville stage. He is handicapped by an artificial leg, the result of war wounds, but as this did not prevent him from figuring in a divorce suit, he will also perhaps be able to overcome it in his dramatic career.

It is interesting to know that there is a new Duchess of Leinster, who was formerly Miss May Etheredge, the pretty "Pink Pajama Girl" of the Gaiety Theater. The Duke of Leinster is the premier duke and Earl in the Irish peerage. It is one of the most remarkable Norman families in the United Kingdom, having an unquestioned pedigree and having enjoyed the same high position for fully 800 years.

When May Etheredge married her husband he was Lord Edward Fitz Gerald, and merely the third son of the then duke. Since then his oldest brother, who became the duke, has died of illness, while the next brother, who would have succeeded to the dukedom, was killed in battle. The new duchess has very charming and kindly manners as well as beauty, and it is predicted that she will make as great a success as any of the actresses who have become peeresses. Fortunately for her, the family has recently received \$10,000,000 from the Government in settlement for the Irish estates sold to the tenantry. This should help her to "enjoy the title."

EVERY RANK of the British peerage from duke to baron is now represented on the stage—in most cases by some fair member of a peer's family and in several cases by the noble chief himself.

In a few years, they say, high society will be as lively and entertaining as a variety show.

What is the meaning of this rush of titled women, reared more or less in the lap of luxury, to the difficult, dangerous, not overpaid, formerly despised life of the footlights?

There is no doubt that the principal motive that impels these titled women is the desire to show that they can be just as attractive, if necessary just as reckless, as the women of the class usually trained for the stage. There are indeed many motives which have had their influence in different cases—changed social conditions, poverty in high life, desire for excitement—but the one just mentioned is by far the leading force. Many young English noblewomen have said it. They have been angered by the sight of the richest and most eligible men of their set marrying pretty chorus girls of plebeian birth, and they are determined to show that they can exercise quite as much fascination over the general public themselves.

"We have heard quite too much about the irresistible charm of some very ordinary actresses and chorus girls," said an English duke's daughter recently. "We are told that our men cannot resist them because they are not only beautiful but so witty and such delightful companions."

"The fact is that a very moderate amount of beauty seen through the glamour of the footlights turns the head of the ordinary man. Faces are idealized and limbs are perfected by the footlights. Wit has nothing to do with it. Our girls of birth and breeding have more beauty and more brains as a rule than the actresses of the older type."

"We are proving it. There are no more graceful women in the world than the long limbed girls of the English upper classes, who have grown up with hunting and all kinds of field sports."

Constance, former Duchess of Westminster, is perhaps the most highly placed Englishwoman who has made her appearance on the stage. The Duchess, who was one of the most beautiful and dashing women in English society, recently obtained a divorce from the Duke, who is quite noted as the richest English peer and the owner of Belgrave and Grosvenor Square, two choice parts of London, where many Americans live and others hope to.

Her mother was Mrs. Cornwallis West, who was considered by King Edward the most charming hostess in the "old Marlborough House set."

Some years ago when the young Duchess was busy quarreling with her husband, she acted at a house party, where he was not present, in a gay little sketch called "Scaramouche." She played most of the time in knickerbock-

ers and hopped merrily over the furniture in them. Several persons remarked at the time that there was not a girl at the Gaiety who could show better understandings than the Duchess, and the suggestion sank into her mind.

After her recent divorce she married a young man of no great importance, who had been an actor for a time. Now she is playing comedies in the British provinces with a company of professionals, is making quite a success and enjoying herself very much. It is true that the Duchess announces that she is giving her services for charity, but the dividing line between herself and a professional is almost imperceptible. Incidentally it is rumored that her successor in the affections of the Duke, the present Duchess and former Mrs. Rowley, is seriously considering lending herself to the screen.

It is now some years since Lady Constance Stewart Richardson became a public entertainer. She is the daughter of the Earl of Cromartie, the granddaughter of a former Duke of Sutherland and the widow of an English baronet. She has made a specialty of interpretative dances, with bare limbs. While there have been various opinions about her art, it is generally admitted that she has a very graceful figure. When she appeared in New York her dancing did not excite universal enthusiasm. Recently she has appeared in a sketch called "The Maid of the Mountain" in London and has won a notable success. Her dancing is said to have improved greatly.

Lady Constance now gives her entire life to the stage and shuns society altogether.

Another noble actress is Lady Constance Mallison, who is an Annesley by birth and a daughter of the Earl of Annesley, head of an ancient and historic Irish family. Lady Constance has won a decided success in the distinctly artistic and literary drama. She is known as an interpreter of the plays of Lord Dunsany, John Synge, Arnold Bennett and other interesting playwrights.

The much discussed Lady Diana Manners is of course another woman of title who has become a professional. She is the daughter of the Duke of Rutland, a peer of an Elizabethan family. Lady Diana is now to be seen in that elaborate film "The Great Adventure," and her beauty undoubtedly makes her performance pleasing.

As a matter of fact, Lady Diana is only one of an army of titled Englishwomen who are acting for the screen. Lady Stapleton, wife of Sir Miles Stapleton, a baronet of large estates, has been acting for the movies with marked success for a considerable time. A great many upper class Englishwomen possess the

beauty of the face and figure which are so desirable in movie work and at the same time show considerably more dramatic art than Lady Diana.

Lord Howard de Walden, who inherited a large slice of London from the eccentric underground Duke of Portland, is directing a British film company.

The Hon. Helen Montague, daughter of Lord Montague of Beaulieu, recently made her appearance as a showgirl in New York and is now pursuing the same career elsewhere. This is especially interesting, because the Hon. Helen belongs to the same family as the Duke of Buccleuch, one of the proudest peers in England and a representative of the royal Stuarts "by the left hand." The late Duchess of Buccleuch, who was a great confidante of Queen Victoria, was noted for her opposition to everything giddy in society.

The Hon. Helen Montague is a handsome girl and acquitted herself creditably among the skirt waving ranks. She explained that high society was insufferably dull to her, that she wanted some excitement and had found it.

It is not only in England that society women are going on the stage. The same tendency is noticeable all over the world—in the United States, France, Germany and other countries.

In America our society women are not generally in financial distress or otherwise disturbed by the war, but they show a disposition as usual to follow the example of Britain's aristocracy. Mrs. Lydig Hoyt, who was fully as noted a

figure in New York Society as the Duchess of Westminster in England, has become a professional actress and won hearty admiration by her talent as well as her beauty. Young Mrs. August Belmont, Jr., has made a dash into the movies and may make another.

Miss Peggy White, a popular New York society girl, and Miss Peggy Thayer, who is equally prominent in Philadelphia, are two more fashionable recruits to the footlights.

The present Mrs. John Barrymore, formerly Mrs. Leonard Thomas, who was born to high social position in New York and later excited admiration by her beautiful and statuesque appearance at the head of a suffrage parade, has tried her hand as a playwright. Her friends would not be surprised if she made her debut on the stage at any moment.

High French society is more inclined to resist the attraction of the stage than any other, but even there the tendency is seen. New Yorkers, by the way, had the pleasure of seeing a prominent and beautiful member of the French aristocracy, the Baroness de Grandcourt, on our local stage. Under the name of Patricia O'Connor, she appeared as the Queen in "Aphrodite" and thrilled great audiences by her wonderful beauty and fine acting. She has also acted with the Gaiety Company in London.

Poverty is perhaps the chief reason that has turned the princesses of war-wrecked Germany, Austria and Russia to the stage. Several women of the exiled Kaiser's family, including the Princess August

Wilhelm of Prussia, are trying to win applause on the vaudeville stage.

Charming princesses of ruined Russia are seeking a living as public artists in nearly every country of the world, usually practicing the singer's or the dancer's art. They will apparently win a permanent place among artists of the first rank. Princess Ouroussova of Russia, has become a leading operatic singer in London. In New York we are entertained by Russian princesses in a dozen places every evening.

The capture of leading British peers by stage beauties has had something to do with driving society women to the boards, as we have seen. Some of these actress-peeresses present an interesting object lesson to society women. The Marquis of Headfort was a typical idle "gilded youth," when he courted Miss Rosalie Boote, the reigning divinity of the Gaiety Theater and made her Marchioness of Headfort.

The Marchioness has become a beautiful, stately, gracious leader of society, liked even by the most conservative element. She manages her husband's country estate to perfection, hunts with spirit, and has raised a large family of handsome children. A similar triumph was achieved by Belle Bilton, formerly of the Alhambra. When young Viscount Dunlop, son of the Earl of Clancarty, first wanted to marry her, his father resorted to amazing intrigues to keep them apart, but in vain. Eventually she became Countess of Clancarty and society acknowledged her charms. The Countess